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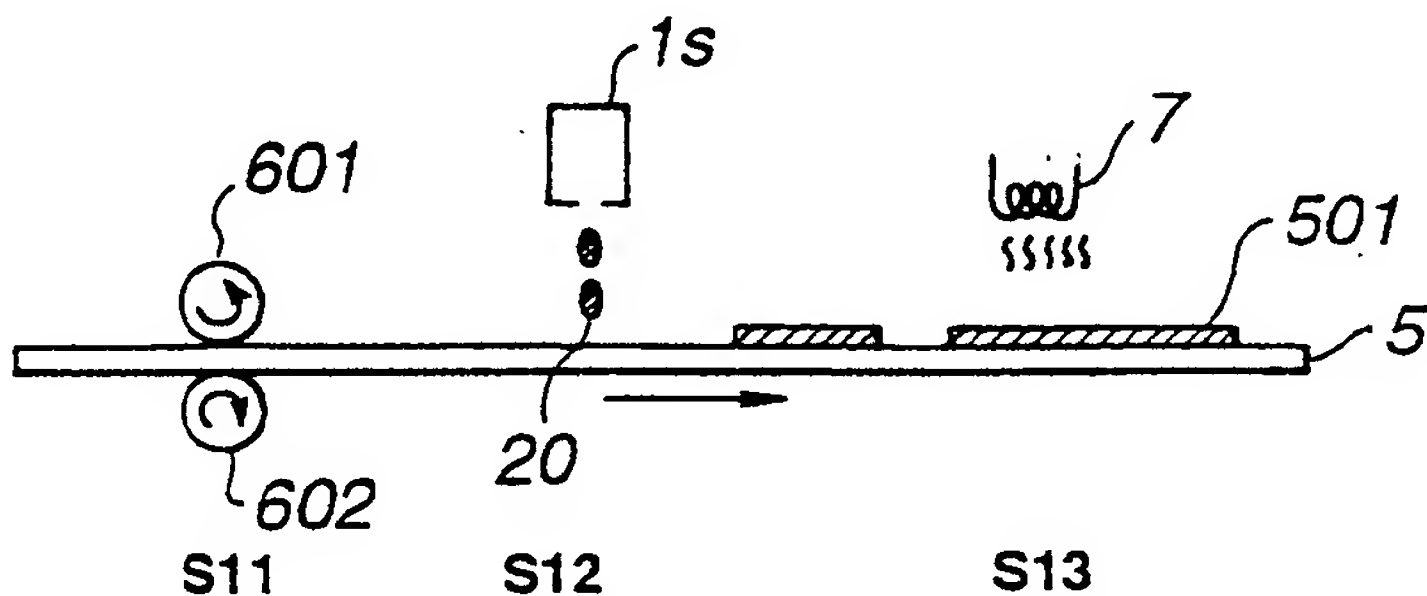
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(54) **Printing method and apparatus for performing the method and method of using an ink jet system**

(57) A printing method comprises a step of designating a prescribed area of an ink-coating surface as a surface modification area; a step of coating said designated area with a surface modifier by an ink yet head; a step of transferring to another position said area of said ink-coating surface coated with said modifier in or-

der to dry said surface modifier; and a step of returning said ink-coating surface, in which said surface modifier is dried, to the position where said surface modifier was supplied, and expelling ink on said ink-coating surface by an ink jet head on the basis of ink expelling information from a computer.

FIG.8



Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a printing method and apparatus for a personal computer, called a printer, and more particularly to an improved printing technology able to make high quality prints on even regular paper by coating a surface modifier on only a specific portion, where an image is to be printed, of the surface of regular paper, in order for printing an image such as a photograph on regular paper.

[0002] In recent years, as inexpensive color printers have become mainstream, users have become able to print images, such as photographs and designs prepared on personal computers, using color printers. A printing apparatus (color printer) prints (the term "printing" will hereafter refer to the printing of both images and text) images such as photographs and designs, as well as specified text, with the specified coloration and at one time on printer paper supplied thereto, on the basis of printing information supplied from a personal computer. When the printer paper is a recording medium such as regular paper, however, it is not possible to print images with very good quality because of the poor coloring properties and moisture absorption of the recording medium.

[0003] For this reason, when a user wanted to make a high quality print of a photograph or the like, the user had to make the print using special paper, coated with a surface modifier, instead of regular paper. Inventions relating to this special paper include JP-A-6-48016, JP-A-6-255235, and JP-A-7-68919.

[0004] However, the special paper is more expensive than regular paper. It is not economical to use expensive special paper for printing a photograph on only one part of the special paper. Also, only a few types of special paper are commercially available and are not readily available to many offices and storeholds. For this reason, the use of color printers has many limitations; for example, users usually print images such as photographs on regular paper, knowing that the print will be poor quality, or prepare data without using these images.

[0005] EP-A-0 671 268 discloses printing apparatus according to the prior art portion of claim 1. In one embodiment described in this document, droplets of a surface modifier are ejected onto the recording surface of a recording medium at all positions onto which subsequently an inkjet head ejects ink droplets for printing. Thus, when a whole page is to be printed by text and/or images, the whole page will be coated with the surface modifier irrespective of whether text or images is printed in a particular area of the page. In another embodiment, in which the surface modifier is applied by means of a roller, the recording medium is transported through three sections arranged in series, namely first a coating section, then a heating section to dry the surface modifier, and finally a printing section. In this embodiment the surface modifier is applied even to areas of the recording surface that will not be printed at all.

[0006] EP-A-0 703 087 discloses an inkjet printing apparatus and method in which an inkjet ejecting portion for ejecting ink onto a recording medium for printing, and a surface modifier ejecting portion for ejecting a surface modifier to improve the print quality are provided. The user can decide whether or not the surface modifier is to be used. Alternatively, the printing apparatus can be programmed not to use the surface modifier when the recording medium used does not require it or when test printing is done.

[0007] EP-A-0 737 592 discloses a recording medium for use with inkjet printers, the recording medium comprising an ink-receiving layer on a support. The main constituent of the ink-receiving layer is a low-molecular weight gelatin or a certain polymer compound. Additives that may further be included include silica, alumina sol, ultraviolet absorbers and antioxidants.

[0008] EP-A-0 602 494 discloses an inkjet recording sheet comprising an ink-receiving layer on a support wherein the ink-receiving layer contains at least one porous inorganic pigment selected from synthetic amorphous silica, magnesium carbonate and alumina hydrate. A binder for the pigment includes homopolymers and copolymers of vinyl acetate, acrylonitrile etc.

[0009] In view of the foregoing, an aim of the present invention is to make possible high quality printing without the use of special paper.

[0010] Specifically, a first object of the present invention is to provide a printing technology for high quality printing of images, such as photographs and designs, using even regular paper, and without the use of expensive special paper, by coating only a specific area of the recording medium with a surface modifier.

[0011] A second object of the present invention is to provide a printing technology making possible high quality printing of images such as photographs and designs, because the technology is constituted so that users can designate the areas where high quality printing is desired.

[0012] A third object of the present invention is to provide a printing technology making it possible to automatically make high quality prints in the image area, in the case where the printing information includes an image.

[0013] These objects are achieved by a printing method and apparatus as claimed

[0014] According to a first aspect of the invention a printing method comprises: a step of designating a prescribed area of an ink-coating surface as a surface modification area; a step of coating said designated area with a surface modifier by an ink jet head; a step of transferring to another position said area of said ink-coating surface coated with said modifier in order to dry said surface modifier; and a step of returning said ink-coating surface, in which said surface modifier is dried, to the position where said surface modifier was supplied, and expelling ink on said ink-coating surface by an ink jet head on the basis of ink expelling information from a computer.

[0015] An apparatus for performing this method may comprise: means for supplying a recording medium; means for coating surface modifier on the surface modification area of the recording medium; means for drying the surface modifier coated on the aforementioned surface modification area and means for moving the recording medium with the surface modification area thereon.

[0016] The recording medium may be made of paper, as well as other materials such as rubber, resin film, or the like. The supplying means may be means for supplying used in printing, such as supplying by means of rollers or supplying by pulling using suction. The coating means is preferably an inkjet system, because an inkjet system is able to coat the appropriate amount of surface modifier at an arbitrary position on the recording medium. However, the coating means may be other means, as long as the coating means able to coat the surface modifier uniformly and in a specific area. Various known means and methods may be used, for example, coating with rollers or balls, coating by spraying, and coating with plates. Various known means may be used as the means for drying, for example, means applying heat or blowing air. For example, an electric heater, hot air draft, or light irradiation may be used.

[0017] The means for printing preferably uses an inkjet system, but various systems, or printing mechanisms, may be employed, including a dot impact system or laser printer system. Moreover, the means for printing is preferably means for color printing constituted so as to effect color printing with a plurality of colored inks.

[0018] According to a second aspect of the invention a method of using an ink jet system including a head adapted to expel ink on an ink-coating surface on the basis of ink expelling information, constructed so as to expel a surface modifier from said head for modifying said ink-coating surface, comprises: designating a prescribed area of said ink-coating surface as a surface modification area to be modified and expelling said surface modifier on said surface modification area using said head; and designating a drying position for drying said ink-coating surface of said surface modification area which is coated with said surface modifier.

[0019] The present invention will now be described by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an inkjet printer (printing apparatus) relating to the present invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of a breakdown of the inkjet print head relating to the present invention;

Figure 3 is a block diagram of a control circuit 10;

Figure 4 is a process diagram for explaining the

manufacturing method in the first embodiment;

Figure 5 is a front view of paper where the surface modification area is coated;

Figure 6 is a front view of paper on which an image is printed;

Figure 7 is a print sample (catalog) where printing is complete;

Figure 8 is a process diagram (S11-S13) of the manufacturing method in the third embodiment;

Figure 9 is a process diagram (S14) of the manufacturing method in the third embodiment; and

Figure 10 is a process diagram (S15, S16) of the manufacturing method in the third embodiment.

[0020] Next, the preferred embodiments of the present invention are explained with reference to the figures.

[0021] The first embodiment of the present invention relates to an inkjet printer which is provided with a mechanism for applying surface modifier, wherein surface modification is set on the computer side.

[0022] As shown in Figure 1, the inkjet printer in the present embodiment is provided with inkjet print head 1, main body 2, tray 3, output opening 4, supply mechanism 6 (rollers 601, 602 and the motor 600 shown in Figure 3), heater 7, connector 9, control circuit 10, and operation button 11.

[0023] As shown in the detail in this figure, the inkjet print head 1 is provided with heads 1s, 1c, 1m, and 1y, each having the same structure. Different material is expelled from each head. The inkjet print head 1 is constituted to be moved in a direction crosswise to the paper 5 with the motor 101 shown in Figure 3. The head 1s is means for coating surface modifier and is constituted to expel surface modifier from its nozzle 100s according to a surface modifier signal supplied from the control circuit 10. Heads 1c, 1m, and 1y are means for printing; the heads are constituted so that the head 1c expels cyan ink from its nozzle 100, the head 1m expels magenta ink from its nozzle 100m, and the head 1y expels yellow ink from its nozzle 100y, according to a printing signal supplied from the control circuit 10. Each head 1 (s, c, m, y) is provided with a nozzle plate 101, cavity plate 102, vibrating layer 103, and housing 105, as shown in Figure 2.

[0024] The nozzle plate 101 is disposed on the nozzle 100x (x indicates that this may apply to s, c, m, or y). A cavity 102a, side wall 102b, and shared flow path 102c

are established on the cavity plate 102. Material to be expelled, being any of the surface modifier, cyan ink, magenta ink, or yellow ink supplied from an ink tank (not shown), can be filled therein. A thin film element, not shown, is established on the vibrating layer 103; the vibrating layer can be deformed in response to the surface modifier signal or the cyan, magenta, or yellow printing signal from the control circuit 10. The housing 105 is constituted so that the cavity plate 102, whereon the nozzle plate 101 and the vibrating layer 103 are mounted, fits therein.

[0025] Consequently, each head is constituted so that the foregoing material can be expelled from the nozzle 100x, because the pressure in the cavity 102a increases when the vibrating layer 103 is deformed in response to a signal from the control circuit 10.

[0026] Moreover, the present embodiment presupposes an inkjet print head, but this might also be a spray type head, which expels ink drops because of increased pressure due to bubbles formed by raising the ink temperature.

[0027] Also, the present embodiment does not use black ink, for the purpose of simplifying the explanation, but might also use a head for expelling drops of black ink for printing a distinct black color.

[0028] Returning to Figure 1, the main body 2 is a body of an inkjet printer 1; supply mechanism 6 (601, 602 and 600) are arranged in a position where the rollers can supply the paper 5 from the tray 3; the inkjet print head is arranged so that it can move crosswise over the paper 5 supplied by the rollers 6; and a heater 7 is arranged in a position where it can heat each character, or the like, on the paper 5 printed by this head 1. The tray 3 is constituted to supply the paper 5, before printing, to the supply mechanism 6.

[0029] The output opening 4 is provided for outputting the paper 5 when printing is complete.

[0030] The paper 5 is a recording medium, for which regular paper can be used, as well as OHP (overhead projector) sheets, or the like. A medium, to be the subject of color printing such as photographs and designs, is employed.

[0031] The rollers 6 (601, 602, and 600) are constituted to supply the paper 5 in the direction of the output opening 4 with a driving signal output from the control circuit 10, or to transport the paper 5 in a direction opposite thereto.

[0032] The heater 7 is a drying mechanism and is constituted to generate heat when a heating signal is output from the control circuit 10. The temperature increase of the paper 5 from this heating is set to a level sufficient for drying the surface modifier. The connector 9 is constituted to connect a printer cable (not shown) for supplying printing information output by a computer apparatus (not shown). For example, the pins are provided to make possible connection with a general purpose computer apparatus with a Centronics-based protocol.

[0033] The control circuit 10 is provided with a CPU

1000, ROM 1001, RAM 1002, input circuit 1003, output circuit 1004, input circuit 1005, and bus 1006, as shown in Figure 3.

[0034] The CPU 1000 is constituted to operate the rollers 601, 602 as means for supplying by outputting a driving signal to the motor 600 and to operate the heater 7 as means for drying by outputting a heating signal, according to a control program stored in the ROM 1001. Also, the CPU 1000 is constituted to operate the head 1s as means for coating surface modifier by outputting a surface modifier signal to the head 1s and to operate the heads 1c, 1m, and 1y as means for printing by outputting a printing signal. Moreover, in the present embodiment, "printing information" means the information for printing sent from the computer; "printing signal" means the signal output by the control circuit 10 to the heads 1c, 1m, and 1y.

[0035] The ROM 1001 is constituted to store the operating program for the CPU 1000. The RAM 1001 is the temporary memory necessary for operating the CPU 1000 and is constituted to store the printing information supplied via the connector 9. The input circuit 1003 is constituted to supply the operating signals from the operation button 11 to the CPU 1000. The output circuit 1004 is constituted to supply the printing signal, surface modifier signal, driving signal, heating signal, and driving signal from the CPU 1000, to the head 1s, and the heads 1c, 1m, and 1y, motor 101, heater 7, and motor 600 respectively. The input circuit 1005 is constituted to output the printing information supplied from the connector 9 to the bus 1006. The bus 1006 is constituted to be able to connect together the CPU 1000, ROM 1001, RAM 1002, input circuit 1003, output circuit 1004, and input circuit 1005. Back in Figure 1, the operation button 11 is constituted to output an operating signal, indicating the operation details of the apparatus, to the input circuit 1003, when operated by a user. In other words, this inkjet printer is a printing apparatus which is provided with the following: a supply means (supply mechanism 6 and control apparatus 10) for supplying a recording medium (paper 5); surface modifier means (head 1s, motor 101, and control apparatus 10) for coating surface modifier on a surface modification area, where the surface is to be modified, of the surface of the recording medium supplied by the supply means; and a drying means (heater 7 and control apparatus 10) for drying the surface modifier coated on the surface modification area. The surface modifier is constituted to comprise one or more of the following: a mixture of porous silica grains and alumina sol, a mixture of porous silica grains and alumina hydrate, silica and boehmite, ultraviolet absorber, antioxidant, and quencher. A surface modifier having the following composition is especially preferable.

1) An ink made of a binder with a mixture of porous silica grains and alumina sol (mean grain diameter 2-50 μm , mean pore diameter 8-50 nm, pore vol-

ume 0.8-2.5 cm³/g).

2) An ink comprising silica and boehmite, wherein the boehmite content is 0.5-3.0 wt%, and the silica content per 1 wt% of boehmite is 0.1-0.4 wt%.

3) A composition of the foregoing inks in 1) and 2) with improved light fastness and coloring properties because of the addition of ultraviolet absorber, antioxidant, and quencher.

[0036] Also a surface modifier in ink form preferably has a viscosity of 10 mPa·s (10 cP) or less, and more preferably about 3 mPa·s (3 cP). A higher viscosity makes it difficult to expel straight from the nozzle. If the viscosity is too low, the surface modifier easily soaks into regular paper and cannot form an optimum layer; it also takes more time to dry.

[0037] Also, for dispersion properties, a dispersion with a mean grain diameter of 1 μm or less is preferable. If dispersion is too great, the surface modifier will coat portions outside the image area. Explanation of printing method

[0038] Next, the method for printing with the printing apparatus in this first embodiment is explained. As shown in Figure 4, the printing method of the present invention comprises: a step (S1) for supplying the recording medium (paper 5); a step (S2) for coating the surface modifier on the surface modification area of the supplied recording medium with the head 1s and control apparatus 10; a step (S3) for drying the surface modifier coated on the surface modification area with the heater 7 and control apparatus 10; and a step (S4) for effecting printing, including printing on the surface modification area, with the control circuit 10 and the heads 1c, 1m, and 1y, after the surface modifier coated on the surface of the recording medium is dried. This is explained below. The inkjet printer of the present embodiment prints according to printing information sent from a computer connected by means of the connector 9. The printing information has two modes: the case when the surface modification area is not designated on the printer side (mode 1), and the case when the surface modification area is designated on the printer side (mode 2). The first embodiment is the case of mode 1. Now, the user prepares a document using a word processor installed on the computer and commands the computer to print the prepared document. This document relates to a catalog as shown in Figure 7 and is constituted of a design 502a and photographs 502b and 502c, as well as the text 503. The design and photographs are inserted as image information (bit map data).

[0039] When commanded to print, the computer starts a printer driver program for the pertinent inkjet printer, converts the document information prepared with the word processor to printing information which can be printed with the inkjet printer, and outputs the printing information to the printer.

[0040] When image information is included in the document information, the printer driver program generates

information for designating surface modification to indicate the modification of an area of the surface of the paper 5 corresponding to the image and outputs this information for designating surface modification separately from the usual printing information or appended to the printing information. This information for designating surface modification includes the command for modifying the surface of the paper and area information designating the position on the paper of the area to be modified. Moreover, the information for designating surface modification may be output in advance of the printing information or at the same time as the printing information. When information for designating surface modification is sent from the computer, the CPU 1000 of the control circuit 10 of this printer stores that information in the RAM 1002 and modifies the surface in step S2 on the basis of that information.

[0041] Moreover, as discussed above, the constitution may be such that the computer automatically indicates the information for designating surface modification, or that a computer user can arbitrarily designate surface modification. In other words, the present invention can be constituted so that a user can designate areas where high quality printing is desired, regardless of whether photographs or designs are included in the document to be printed, using the input apparatus of the computer. In this case, the computer generates information for designating surface modification, to command surface modification of the designated area on the paper, and outputs this information to the printer. With this method, areas where better printing is desired, even for information such as text, can be freely designated; and this method is effective when clear printing is desired for an epigraph or the like.

[0042] Meanwhile, the printer may be constituted so that surface modification is nullified when the user operates the operation button 11, regardless of whether information for designating surface modification is sent from the computer. For example, this is effective in the case where a user wants to print using a so-called backing sheet, just to check the printed contents, such as when making a test print.

[0043] Step S1 (paper supply): The control circuit 10, which received the printing information, outputs a driving signal, corresponding to a code indicating the start of document printing and repagination in the printing information, to the motor 600, and causes the rollers 601 and 602 to rotate and supply the paper five into the main body 2. When the information for designating surface modification for modifying the surface is output for a page to be printed, the control circuit 10 causes the heater 7 to heat up and at the same time prepares the head 1s for expelling the surface modifier.

[0044] Step S2 (coating surface modifier): When the printing information includes the information for designating surface modification, the rollers 601, 602 and head 1s are driven until the head 1s is positioned on the surface modification area, on the basis of the position

information of the area to be modified, and the head 1s expels the surface modifier 20 on the basis of the surface modification signal. The surface modification area 501 is formed on the paper 5 when the surface modifier 20 is expelled. This surface modification area 501 is the area where an image is printed, as shown in Figures 5 and 6.

[0045] Step S3 (drying): When the printing information includes information for designating surface modification, the control circuit 10 causes the heater 7 to heat. The heater 7 promotes the drying of the surface modifier by heating and drying the surface modification area 501. The heating temperature depends on the composition of the surface modifier, but about 80 °C is appropriate. The drying time is appropriately about 120 seconds. If the drying temperature is too high or the drying time too long, the paper may deform or degrade. If the drying temperature is too low or the drying time too short, the surface modifier will not be sufficiently dried.

[0046] Step S4 (printing): When drying with the heater 7 is complete, the control circuit 10 outputs a printing signal to the heads 1c, 1m, and 1y, outputs a driving signal to the motor 101, and causes printing on the entire surface of the paper 5, including the surface modification area. At this time, an image 502, such as a photograph, design, or the like, based on the image data is printed on the surface modification area 501. Text and the like is printed together with the image printing. For example, in Figure 6, the image 502 is a photograph for which is explained by the explanatory text 503 and the date the photograph 502 was taken is printed below the photograph.

[0047] In a catalog printed with the aforementioned procedure, as shown in Figure 7, a design 502a showing a company name and photographs 502b, 502c are printed on the surface modification area; explanatory text 503 is printed directly on the regular paper. Because the design and photographs are printed on the surface modification area 501, the printing is of the same high quality as when special paper is used.

[0048] As noted above, because in the first embodiment an inkjet printer is provided with means for coating surface modifier and a control circuit for coating surface modifier therewith, the first embodiment is able to modify the surface of the surface modification area and make high quality prints using regular paper, when surface modification is necessary. This embodiment is especially effective in the case where the surface modifier dries quickly.

[0049] A portion with the surface modified in this way has good properties such as ink coloration, color reproduction, uniform dot formation; print density is high and the concentration is uniform.

[0050] Such a surface modified portion provides high quality prints with little bleeding and sharp edges.

[0051] Also, when the surface modifier is blended with an ultraviolet absorber and antioxidant, the image preservation is superior in terms of weather resistance (es-

pecially ozone resistance), light fastness (especially ultraviolet light), water resistance, and less bleeding because of changes over time.

[0052] Furthermore, other properties are that the paper does not easily curl and the surface modifier layer does not peel off.

[0053] In the aforementioned first embodiment, the printing information sent from the computer included the information for designating surface modification and printing in accord therewith was effected by the inkjet printer. In the second embodiment, however, the mode (mode 2) for setting the surface modification area on the printer side is explained with the same constitution as the first embodiment.

[0054] The constitution of the second embodiment is the same as that of the first embodiment; an explanation thereof is not included. In the case of setting the surface modification area on the printer side, the computer outputs the document information to the printer without any further processing. In other words, the text information is output as text information and the image information as image information; no information for commanding surface modification is included.

[0055] In the case where image information is included in the printing information sent from the computer, the CPU 1000 of the control circuit 10 for the printer meanwhile prepares data to the effect of performing surface modification at a position on the paper 5 corresponding to that image information and stores this data in the RAM 1002. This data includes information specifying the position on the paper to undergo surface modification, in the same way as the aforementioned information for designating surface modification.

[0056] Moreover, the embodiment may also be constituted so that the user can indicate with the computer whether to perform surface modification. In other words, the embodiment is constituted so that the user can set the validity/invalidity of surface modification in the printer driver program and can output a command showing this validity/invalidity to the printer. In such a constitution, the printer effects the setting for surface modification only when this command is valid.

[0057] Also, the constitution may be such that a user may set surface modification to be invalid, regardless of whether the printing information includes image information, by operating the operation button 11.

[0058] The method for printing, excluding the setting of surface modification, is the same as in the aforementioned first embodiment and an explanation thereof is not included. In the step (corresponding to the aforementioned S2) for coating the surface modifier, the control circuit 10 effects coating of the surface modifier on the basis of the position information for the surface modification area it the control circuit 10 established in the RAM 1002.

[0059] As noted above, the second embodiment determines the contents of the printing information on the printing apparatus side and applies the surface modifier

in the case where surface modification is authorized; printing can therefore be done from a usual computer apparatus where a printer driver program, specifically for this printer, is not installed.

[0060] In the aforementioned first embodiment, printing is effected without further processing after application of the surface modifier; in the second embodiment, however, the paper is returned to the supply starting position.

[0061] The constitution of the third embodiment is the same as the first embodiment and the explanation is therefore omitted. The setting of the surface modification area is based on the information for designating surface modification sent from the computer apparatus like in the first embodiment; the surface modification area may also be set like in the second embodiment, where the printer device recognizes image data and sets the surface modification area. Next, the printing method of the present embodiment is explained using Figures 8-10.

[0062] Steps S11-S13 (supply paper, apply surface modifier, drying): These steps are the same as steps S1-S3 in the first embodiment. Step S14 (rewind): When the surface modification area 501 is completely dried, the control circuit 10 reverses the rollers 6 and returns the paper 5 to the supply starting position. Step S15 (re-supply): The rewind paper 5 is re-supplied. At this time, the control circuit 10 causes heads 1c, 1m, and 1y to prepare to print.

[0063] Step S16 (print): This printing is the same as that in step S4 in the aforementioned first embodiment.

[0064] Moreover, in step S14, it may also be the case that the paper 5 is not rewound and instead, the paper 5 whereon a surface modification area is formed may be output from the output opening 4. In this case, when the user wants to print, the user once more sets the paper, whereon a surface modification area is formed, in the tray 3 and gives the command to print. This is effective in the case where a user wants to make a high quality image print with a printer other than the printer relating to the present invention for effecting surface modification, or in the case where the surface modifier requires a very long time to dry.

[0065] Also, the present invention may be a printing apparatus which is provided only with the surface modifier head 1s and is not provided with the print heads 1c, 1m, and 1y. In other words, the present invention may constitute a printing apparatus which is a dedicated device for forming surface modification areas. With such an apparatus, a user can print text, images, and the like, with a different printer than the printer for surface modification processing.

[0066] Furthermore, a user can distribute paper whereon the surface modifier is applied only to a specific area in this way. If the position on the paper where images are to be inserted is designated in advance, another user can make high quality prints with another computer and printer, using regular paper with part of the surface

modified. Because the area using surface modifier is small, regular paper, that makes possible high quality printing, can be provided at a much lower price than special paper.

5 **[0067]** As noted above, in the third embodiment, the surface modifier is applied and dried, and the paper is rewound and then re-supplied and printed; therefore, the third embodiment is especially effective in the case where the surface modifier needs time to dry.

10 **[0068]** In other words, with the present invention, a user can make high quality prints of images such as photographs, designs, and the like, just using regular paper, and without using expensive special paper, because surface modifier is applied only to a specific area of the recording medium.

15 **[0069]** With the present invention, users can designate the areas where they want to make high quality prints and make high quality prints of images such as photographs, designs, and the like.

20 **[0070]** The present invention can automatically make a high quality print on a corresponding surface modification area, in the case where an image is included in printing information.

25 **[0071]** In the case where a portion, for which high quality printing is desired, is determined, the present invention can provide a recording medium which makes possible high quality printing at less expense than with conventional special paper.

Claims

1. A printing method comprising:

- 35 a step of designating a prescribed area of an ink-coating surface as a surface modification area;
a step of coating said designated area with a surface modifier by an ink jet head;
40 a step of transferring to another position said area of said ink-coating surface coated with said modifier in order to dry said surface modifier; and
a step of returning said ink-coating surface, in which said surface modifier is dried, to the position where said surface modifier was supplied, and expelling ink on said ink-coating surface by an ink jet head on the basis of ink expelling information from a computer.

2. An apparatus adapted to perform the method defined in claim 1.

- 55 **3.** A method of using an ink jet system including a head adapted to expel ink on an ink-coating surface on the basis of ink expelling information, constructed so as to expel a surface modifier from said head for modifying said ink-coating surface, which is com-

prised of:

designating a prescribed area of said ink-coat-
ing surface as a surface modification area to be
modified and expelling said surface modifier on 5
said surface modification area using said head;
and
designating a drying position for drying said ink-
coating surface of said surface modification ar-
ea which is coated with said surface modifier. 10

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FIG.1

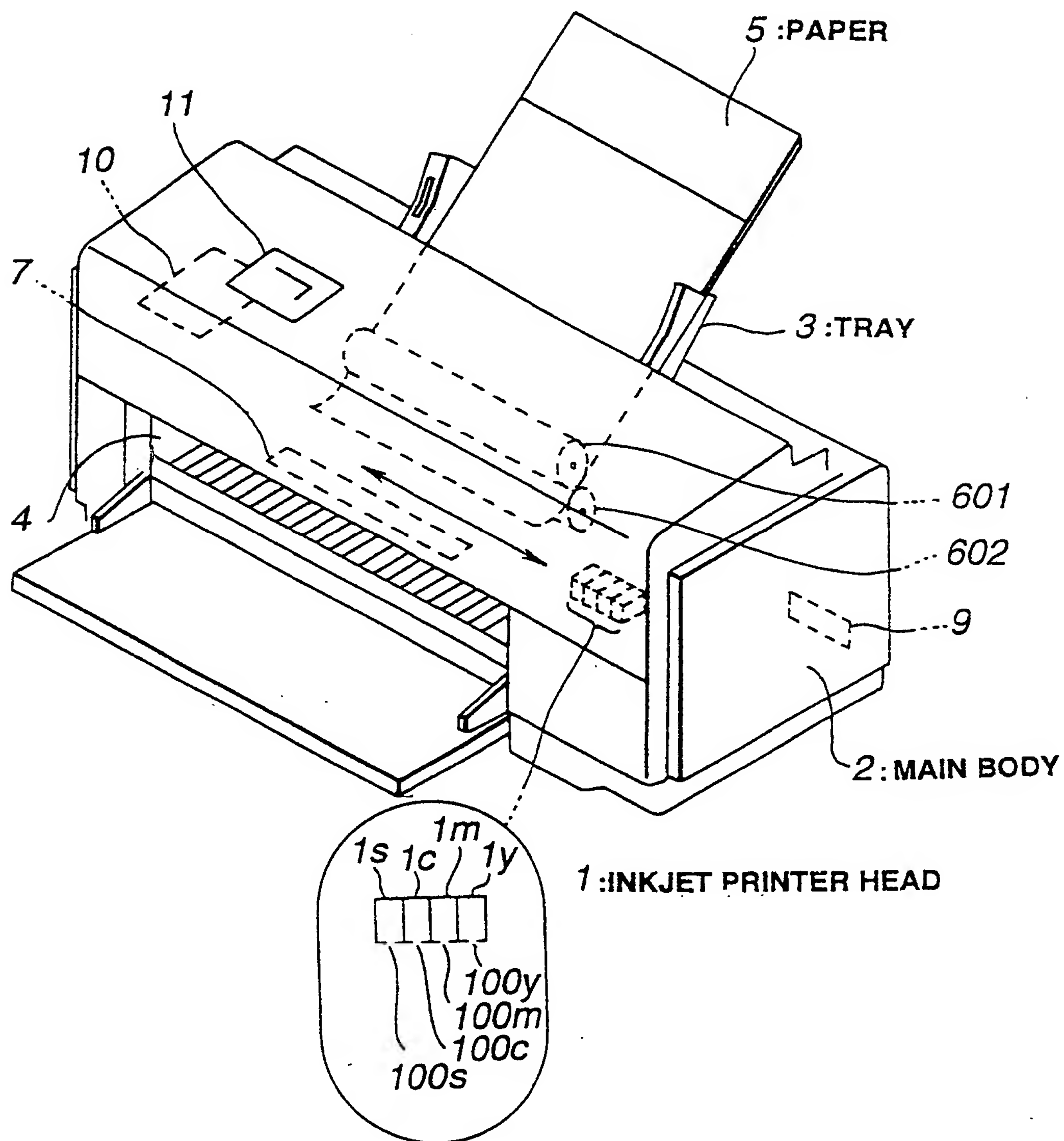
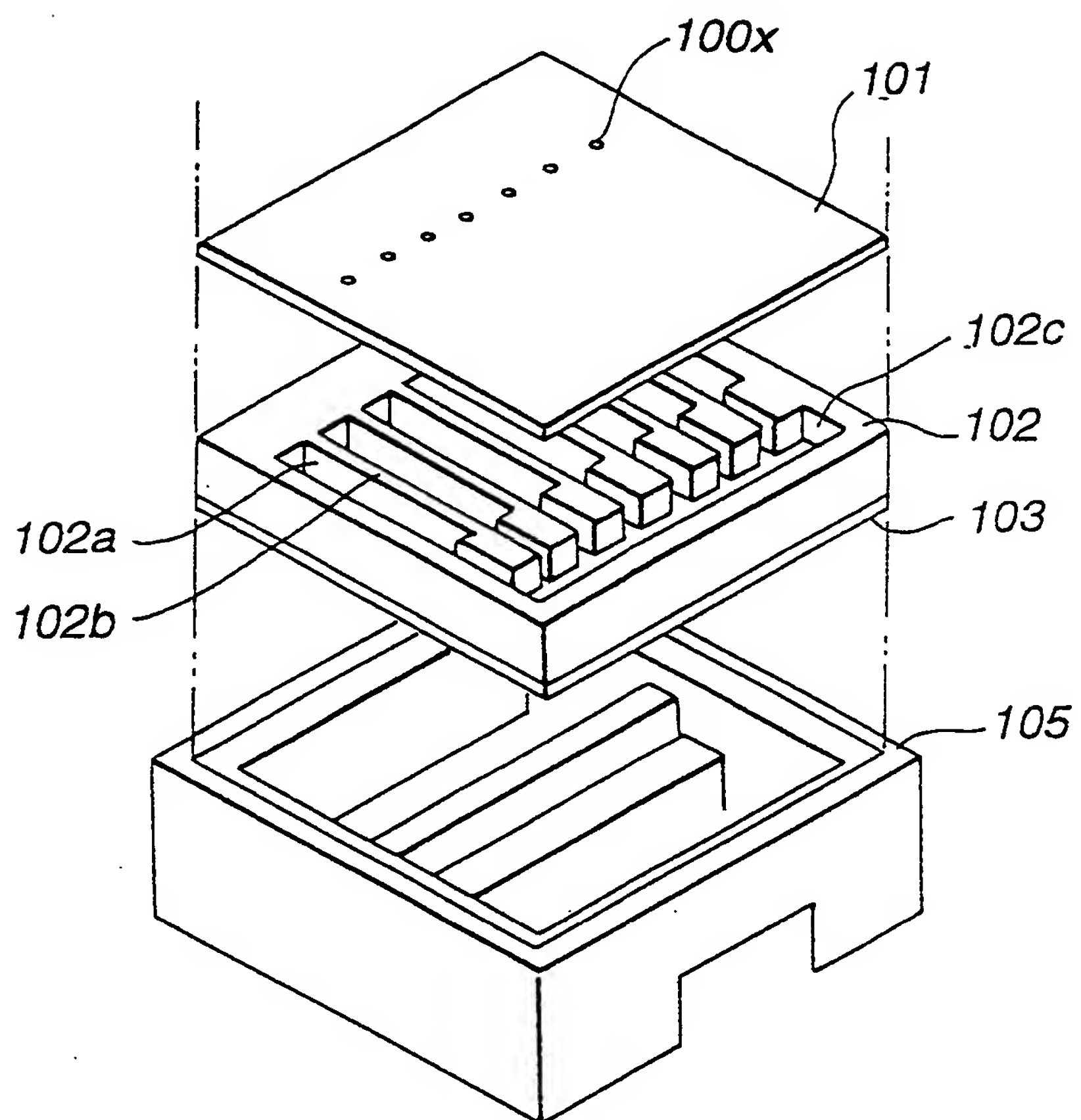


FIG.2



1X :INKJET PRINTER HEAD

FIG.3

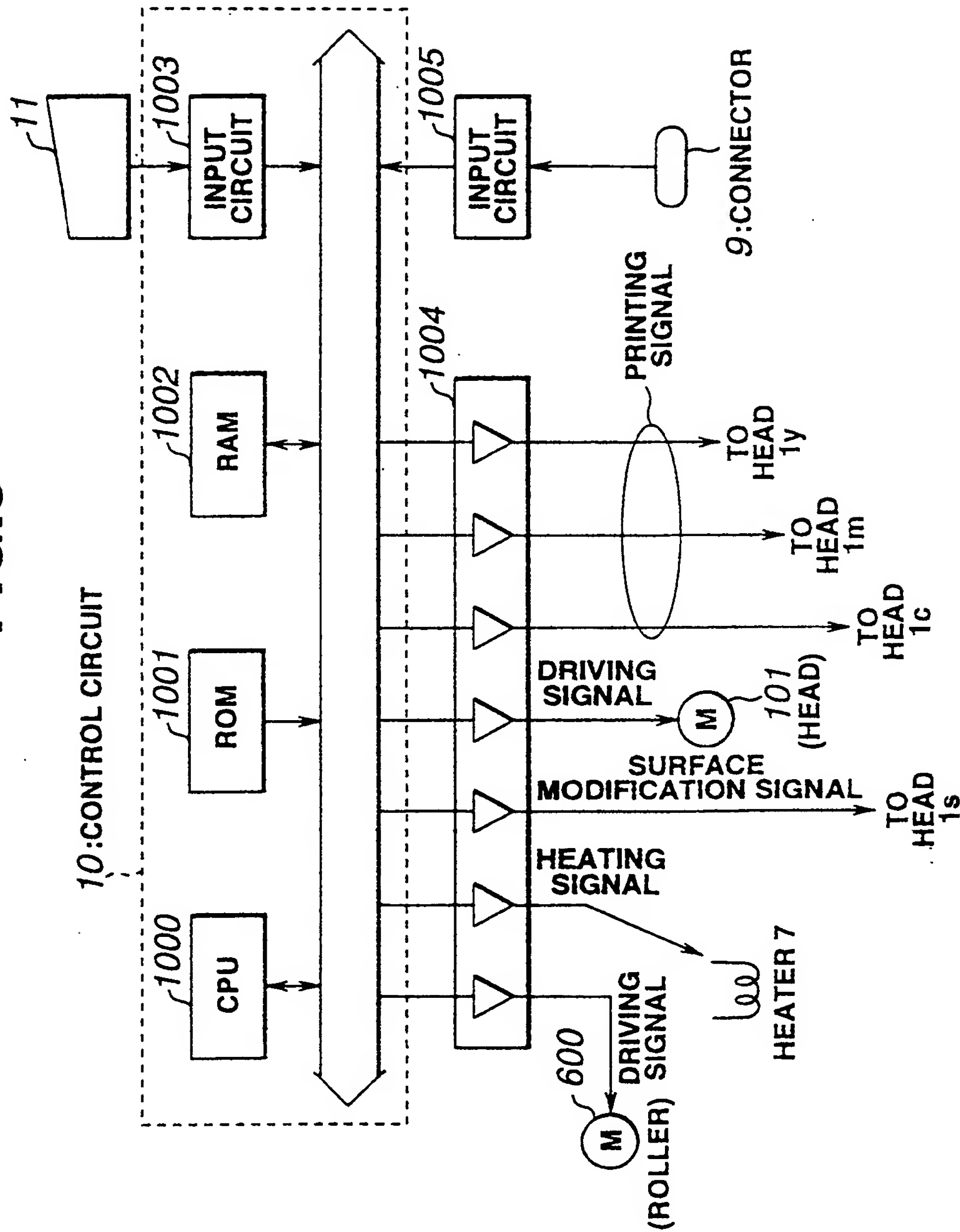


FIG.4

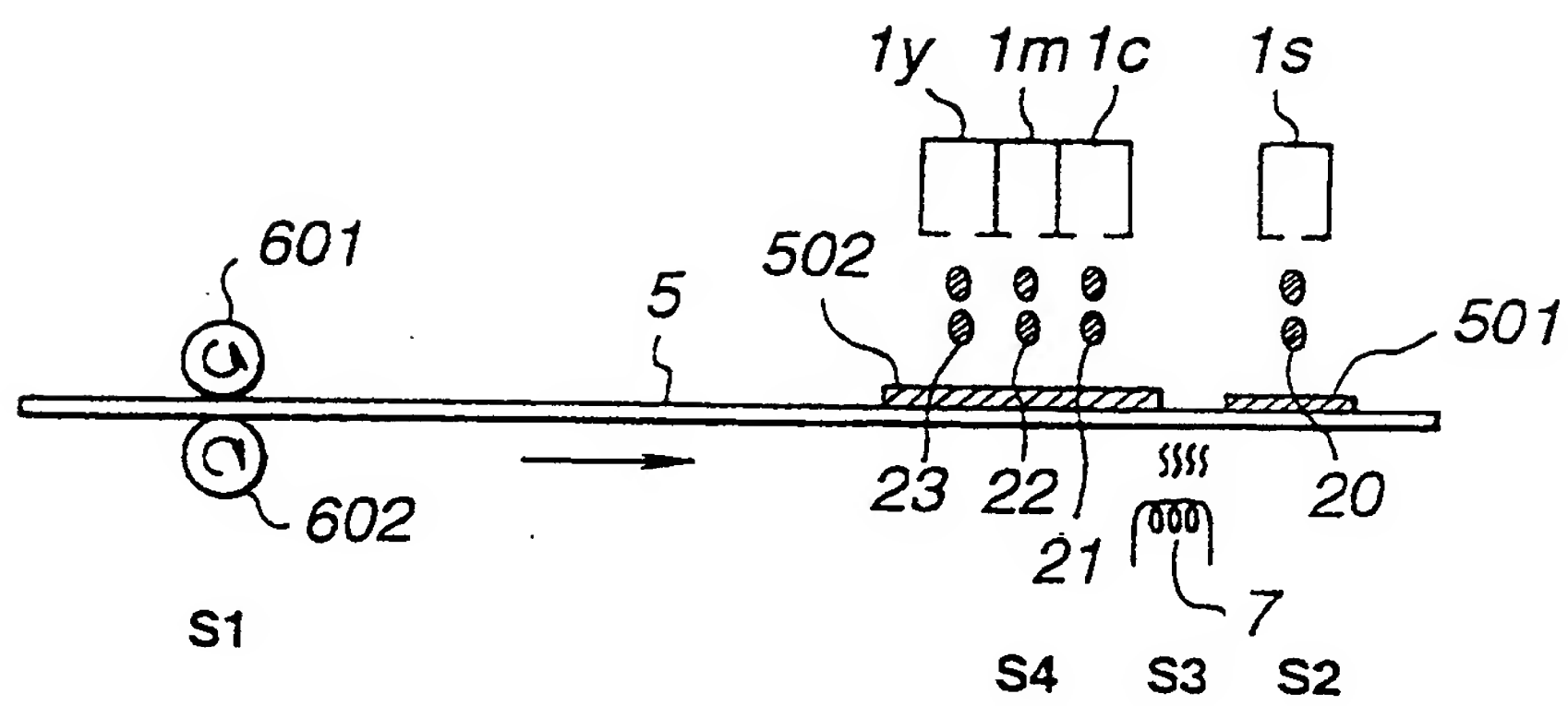


FIG.5

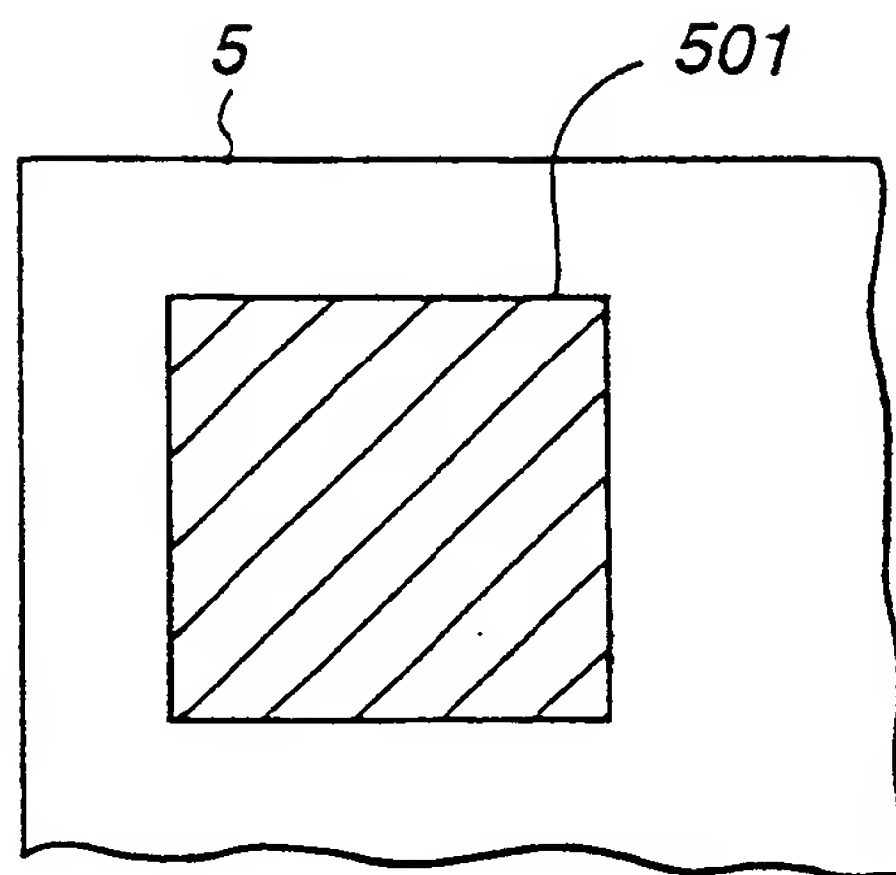


FIG.6

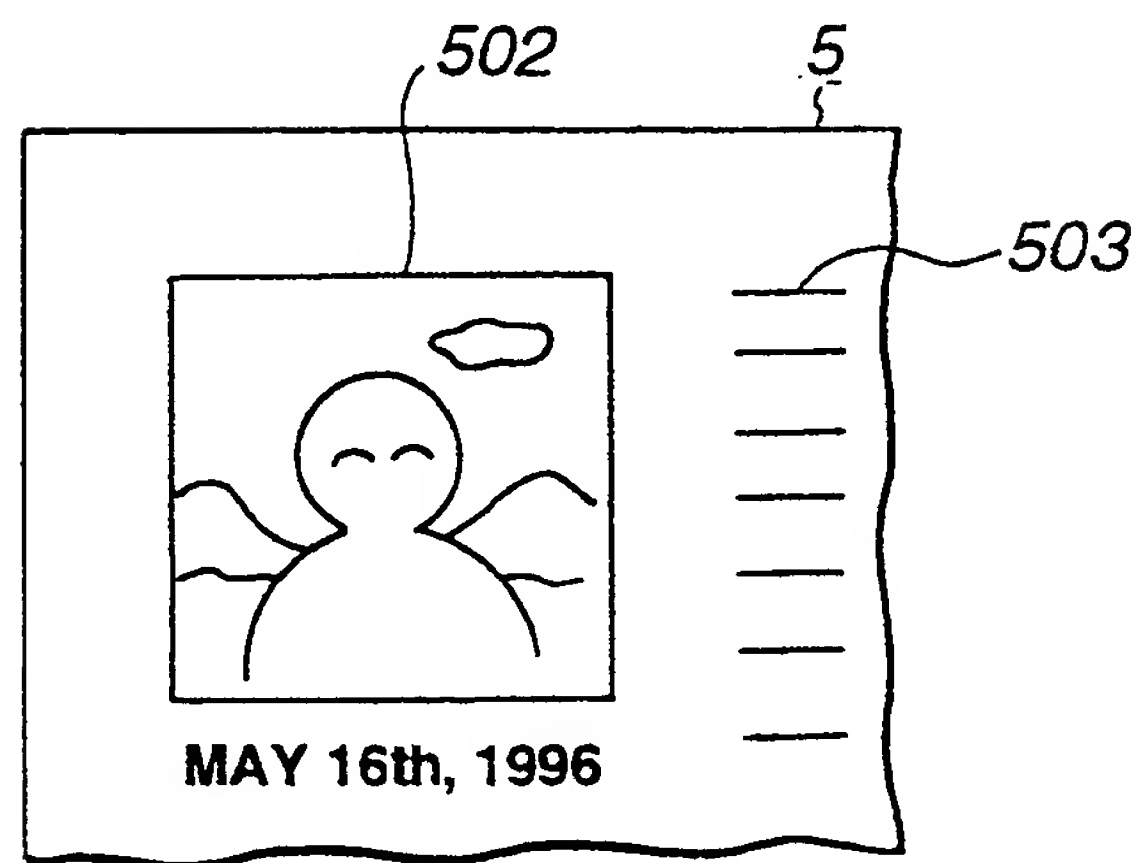


FIG.7

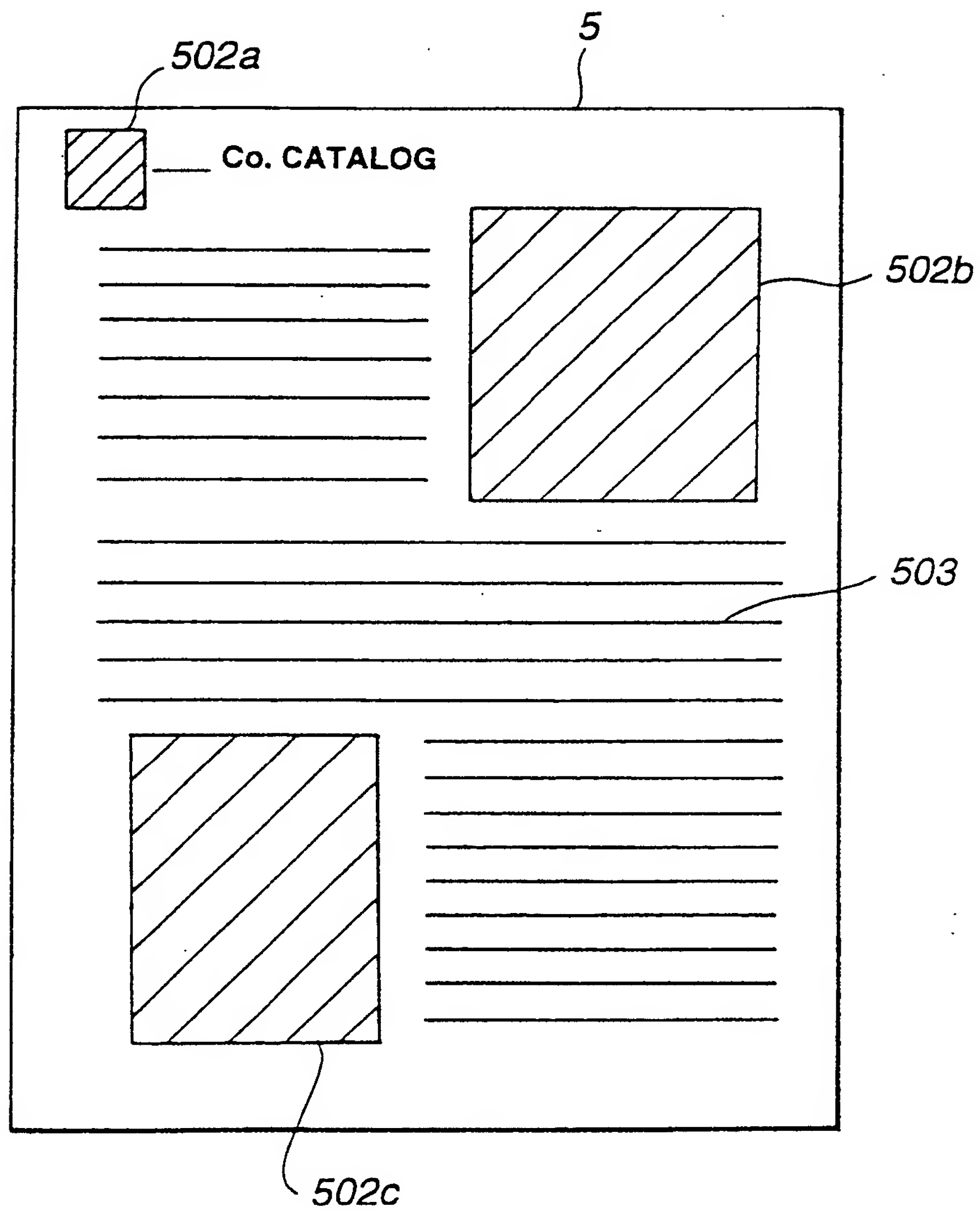


FIG.8

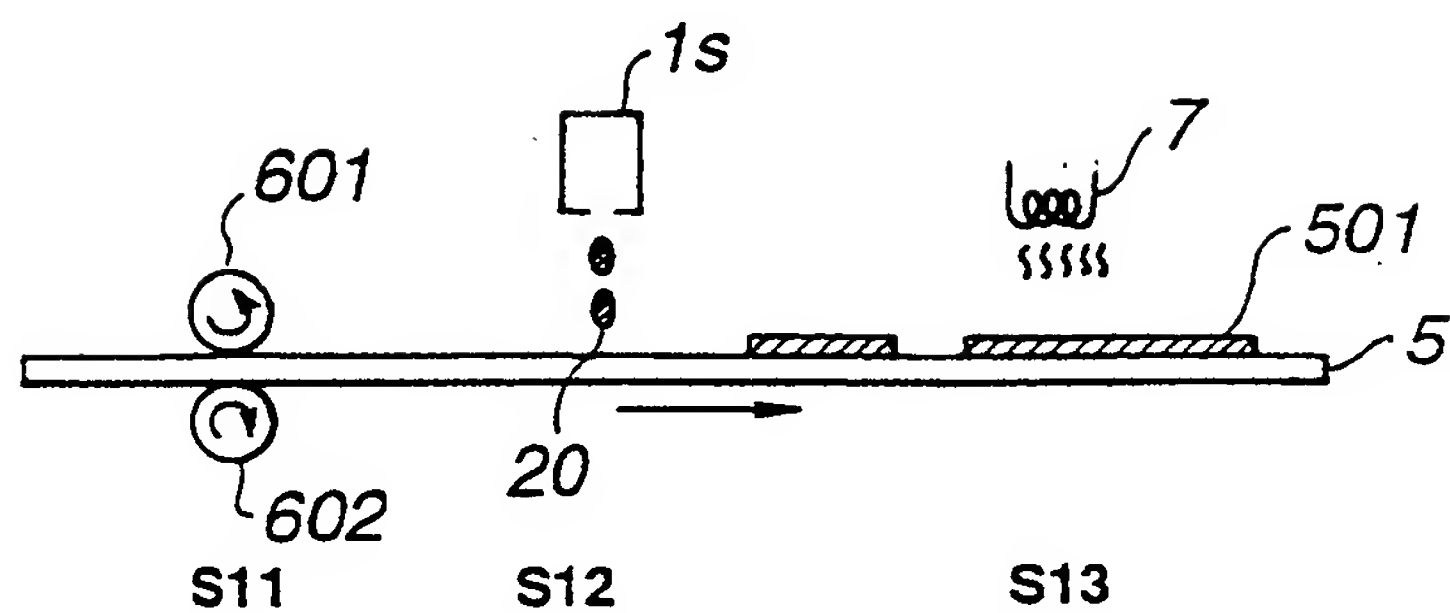


FIG.9

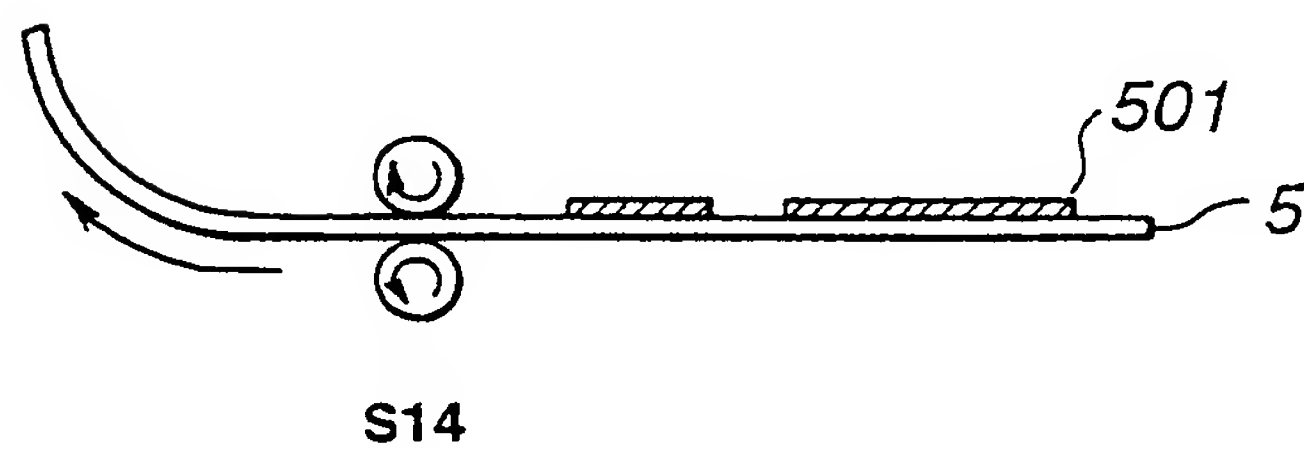
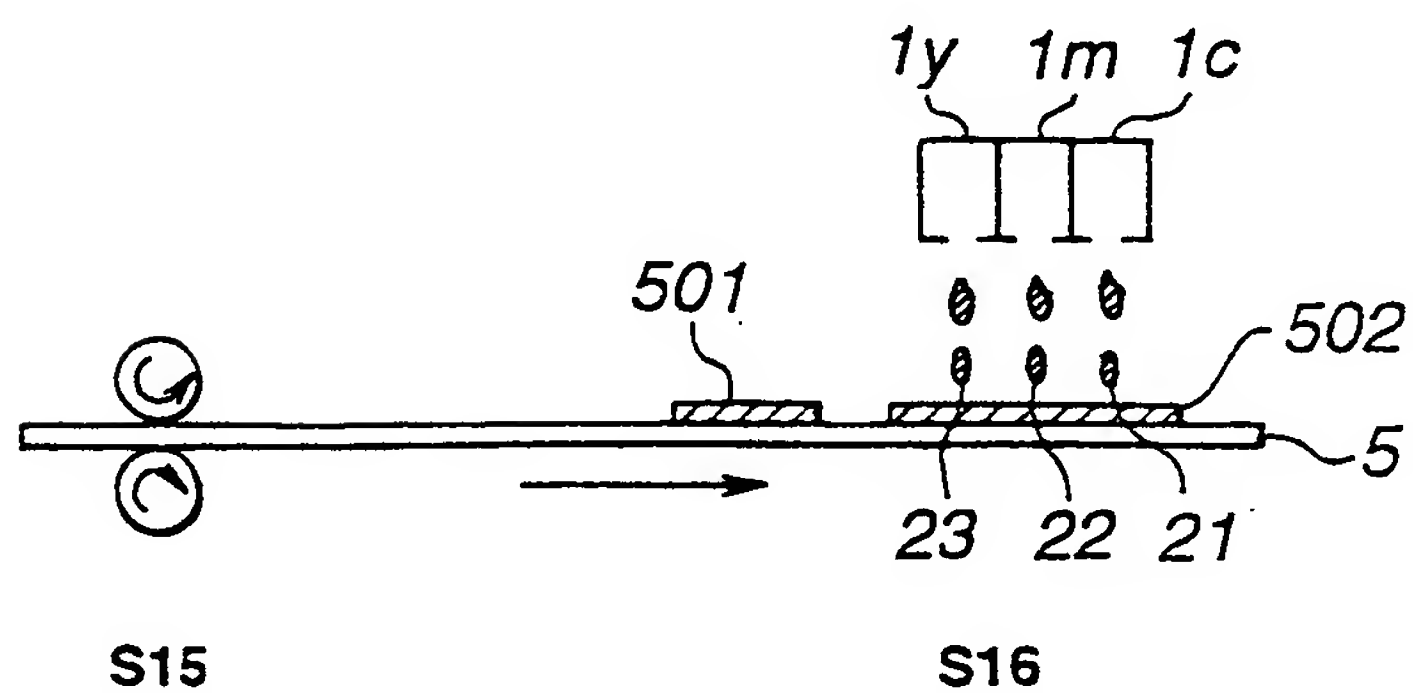


FIG.10



(12)

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<div>(84) Designated Contracting States: DE FR GB</div> <div>(30) Priority: 09.04.1997 JP 9119997</div> <div>(62) Document number(s) of the earlier application(s) in accordance with Art. 76 EPC: 98302807.7 / 0 870 615</div> <div>(71) Applicant: Seiko Epson Corporation Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-0811 (JP)</div>	<div>(72) Inventors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shimoda, Tatsuya, c/o Seiko Epson Corporation Suwa-shi, Nagano-ken 392-8502 (JP) Miyashita, Satoru, c/o Seiko Epson Corporation Suwa-shi, Nagano-ken 392-8502 (JP) Kiguchi, Hiroshi, c/o Seiko Epson Corporation Suwa-shi, Nagano-ken 392-8502 (JP) </div> <div>(74) Representative: Hoffmann, Eckart, Dipl.-Ing. Patentanwalt, Bahnhofstrasse 103 82166 Gräfelfing (DE)</div>
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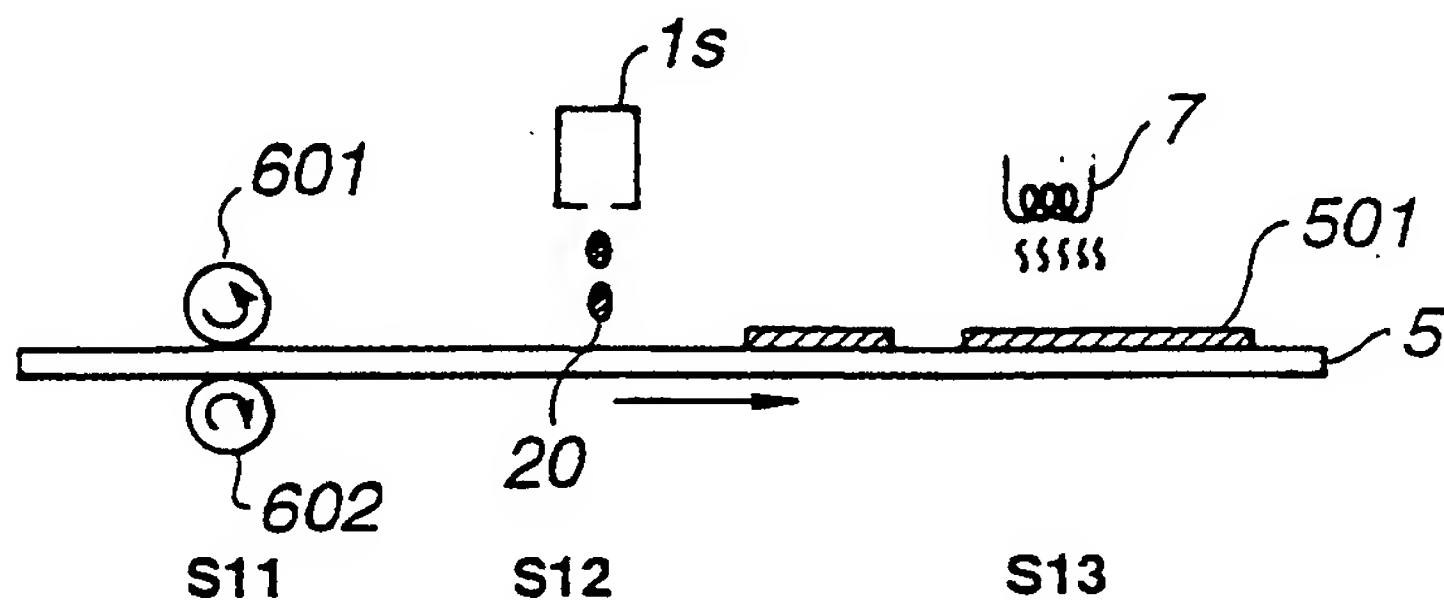
(54)

Printing method and apparatus for performing the method and method of using an ink jet system

(57)

A printing method comprises a step of designating a prescribed area of an ink-coating surface as a surface modification area; a step of coating said designated area with a surface modifier by an ink yet head; a step of transferring to another position said area of said ink-coating surface coated with said modifier in order to dry said surface modifier; and a step of returning said ink-coating surface, in which said surface modifier is dried, to the position where said surface modifier was supplied, and expelling ink on said ink-coating surface by an ink jet head on the basis of ink expelling information from a computer.

FIG.8





European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
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Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 20 March 2003	Examiner Bardet, M
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